

Communiqué de presse *Pour diffusion immédiate*

2023 SPRING FLOODING

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OUTAOUAIS PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Gatineau, May 2 2023 : Due to rising water levels, the Public Health Department of the Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux (CISSS) de l'Outaouais would like to remind citizens of the precautionary measures to take to during a flooding event.

Recommendation summary

- Check that the water is safe to drink. If you own an individual well, consider the water undrinkable.
- Avoid contact with flood water. If you must drive on flooded land, make sure you are well protected.
- Turn off the power to your septic system and avoid using it to prevent a back-up.
- Do not use a fuel-burning appliances indoors to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. Make sure you have a working battery operated carbon monoxide detector.
- Prevent electrocution by turning off the power to your home and keeping your feet dry. Consult Hydro-Québec if you are flooded.
- After a power outage of six hours or more, make sure your food and medication are safe.
- Evacuate your home if you are in danger or if the authorities request it.

Ensure drinking water and food safety

If your water comes from a water system

- Consider the water safe to drink, unless the municipal authorities have told you otherwise. If you are unsure of the color, smell or taste of the water, contact your municipality before consuming it.

If your water is from an individual well

- Consider the water unsafe for consumption, even if it appears clear and odourless. Until the quality of the water can be checked, bring it to a full boil for one minute and let it cool before consuming. You can also use bottled water.
- If you suspect chemical contamination, do not drink the water. In this situation, only bottled water is recommended.

After a power outage of more than six hours, make sure your food is safe to eat.

Sort through the food in your refrigerator and freezer. Medications that should be kept cool but could not be should not be consumed; return them to the pharmacy.

Avoid contact with flood water

- Even if it appears normal, flood water can be contaminated by bacteria, viruses and chemical residues.
- Children should not play in flood water or on land that has been flooded until the soil has dried out. Extra supervision is recommended for young children as they tend to put objects in their mouths.
- If you must travel on flooded ground:
 - Wear rubber boots and appropriate clothing.
 - Cover your wounds with a sterile, waterproof bandage.
 - Keep your feet dry.
 - Wash your hands frequently, especially before eating.
- Throw away any food or medicine that has been in contact with flood water.

Precautions for septic systems

- Turn off the electrical systems that power your septic system.
- Avoid using your septic system to prevent sewage from backing up into the home.
- If you have an NQ 3680-910 certified treatment system, follow the recommendations of the manufacturer or servicing professional.
- Do not empty your septic tank or holding tank during flooding as this may damage them.
- Never drive over your septic system with a vehicle.

Prevent carbon monoxide poisoning

- Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas that you can't see or smell. It is released when appliances and vehicles burn fuel such as wood, propane, oil or gasoline. Breathing this gas can be very dangerous to your health and can even be deadly.
- Make sure you have a battery operated carbon monoxide detector at home.
- If using a generator, install it outside your home or garage, as far away as possible from doors and windows and at least 7 metres from your home.
- Do not use gas appliances indoors which are designed for outdoor use, such as gas pumps, space heaters, barbecues, or lamps.
- Do not run a vehicle engine in a poorly ventilated area.
- If you have symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning such as dizziness, headaches, fatigue or nausea, or if the carbon monoxide alarm sounds, exit immediately and go outside:
 - Call 911.
 - Leave the door open when exiting to ventilate the area.
 - Wait for a firefighter's permission to return inside, even for a few minutes.

Prevent electrocution

Before water accumulates in your home, turn off the power with your feet dry. If water is already in your home, consult Hydro-Québec (1 800 790-2424). Before turning the power back on, have the electrical installation checked by specialists.

Evacuating your home

If you are in danger, or if authorities request it, leave your house. If you don't know where to go, contact your municipality.

Before you leave, take with you the following essential items for you and each member of your family:

- Prescription drugs;
- Hygiene items;
- Change of clothes;
- Blankets;
- Money;
- Identification documents;
- Car and house keys;
- Baby milk, bottles and diapers;
- Electronic devices and accessories for connecting them;
- Items necessary for the well-being of people with special needs.

Secure your pets or take them to a temporary shelter, if permitted. If you leave your home without taking your pets with you, mark the front door of your home to inform first responders.

Inform your family and the municipality of the location of your intended shelter.

Keep in touch with your loved ones, preferably by text message, email and social media. This will leave the telephone network free for urgent calls and emergency responders.

Mental health resources

Pay attention to your mental health and those of your loved ones. The following symptoms can arise during and after experiencing a disaster:

- Anxiety, distress or crying
- Lack of interest or energy;
- Aggressiveness;
- Difficulty concentrating or confusion;
- Increased alcohol or drug use.

Psychosocial intervention professionals are available to support you and to connect you to resources according to your needs or those of your loved ones. Call Info-Social at 811 and choose option 2 to speak to a professional. This service is free and confidential, and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Other information

For any situation where people's safety is immediately at risk, call 911.

For non-emergency health problems or for psychosocial support, contact Info-Santé at 811 or 1-866-567-4036.

For more information on health advice during a flood, consult the Quebec government website at the following address:

<https://www.quebec.ca/en/public-safety-emergencies/emergency-situations-disasters-and-natural-hazards/what-to-do-before-during-after-emergency-disaster/flooding>

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Pour plus de renseignements :

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